

CLAIMS:-

1. A gaming machine including:

a base game of chance having random outcomes which include predetermined winning outcomes, wherein said machine pays winnings upon the occurrence of any
5 of said winning outcomes;

said machine being adapted to allocate feature qualifying attributes such that accumulation of one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes opens a window of opportunity allowing a player to trigger a feature game at any time of their choosing whilst said window of opportunity is open; and

10 said window of opportunity remains open until said player no longer holds said one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

2. A gaming machine according to claim 1 wherein different types of said feature qualifying attributes are represented by corresponding feature qualifying symbols.

3. A gaming machine according to claim 1 or 2 wherein said feature qualifying
15 attributes are awarded at random.

4. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 2 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.

5. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 2 wherein said feature
20 qualifying attributes are awarded during play of said base game on the occurrence of predetermined attribute awarding combinations.

6. A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein accumulated feature qualifying attributes used to trigger said feature game are removed from a player's tally.

25 7. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed at random.

8. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed on the occurrence of a predetermined attribute removing combination occurring during the play of said base game.
- 5 9. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.
- 10 10. A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the characteristics of said feature game is dependent on the accumulation of predetermined feature qualifying attributes.
11. A gaming machine according to claim 10 wherein said feature game includes free games.
12. A gaming machine according to claim 10 or claim 11 wherein said feature game includes win multipliers.
- 15 13. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 12 wherein said feature game includes substitute symbols.
14. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 13 wherein said feature game includes bonus prizes.
15. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 14 wherein said feature
20 game includes held reels.
16. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 15 wherein said feature game includes bonus reels.
17. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 16 wherein said feature game includes bonus scatter symbols.
- 25 18. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 17 wherein said feature game includes bonus substitute symbols.

19. A gaming machine according to any one of claims 10 to 18 wherein said feature game includes bonus trigger combinations which award further feature qualifying attributes.
20. A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein
5 varying levels of said window of opportunity are provided such that higher levels are perceived by a player as returning increased winnings.
21. A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein said feature qualifying attributes are in the form of jackpot qualifying attributes.
22. A gaming machine according to claim 21 wherein said machine is configured to
10 provide a jackpot feature game which can be triggered by a player upon the accumulation of one or more predetermined jackpot qualifying attributes.
23. A gaming machine according to claim 22 wherein player interaction is required to determine if a jackpot prize is won during said jackpot feature game.
24. A gaming machine according to claim 23 wherein a jackpot screen will appear
15 for facilitating said player interaction when a player triggers a jackpot feature game.
25. A gaming machine according to claim 23 or claim 24 wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a stand-alone machine.
26. A gaming machine according to claim 23 or claim 24 wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a number of machines networked together.
- 20 27. A gaming machine according to any one of the preceding claims wherein said base game is a spinning reel type using a simulation of five adjacent wheels to present an array of randomly selected symbols in five columns and three rows.
28. A method of operating a gaming machine, the method including the steps of:
providing a base game of chance having random outcomes which include
25 predetermined winning outcomes, wherein said machine pays winnings upon the occurrence of any of said winning outcomes;

said machine being adapted to allocate feature qualifying attributes such that
accumulation of one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes opens a

window of opportunity allowing a player to trigger a feature game at any time of their choosing whilst said window of opportunity is open; and

said window of opportunity remains open until said player no longer holds said one or more predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

5 29. A method according to claim 28 wherein different types of said feature qualifying attributes are represented by corresponding feature qualifying symbols.

30. A method according to claim 28 or claim 29 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded at random.

31. A method according to claim 28 or claim 29 wherein said feature qualifying
10 attributes are awarded in the event of said base game being played a predetermined number of times.

32. A method according to claim 28 or claim 29 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are awarded during play of said base game on the occurrence of predetermined attribute awarding combinations.

15 33. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 32 wherein accumulated feature qualifying attributes used to trigger said feature game are removed from a player's tally.

34. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 32 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed at random.

20 35. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 32 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed on the occurrence of a predetermined attribute removing combination occurring during the play of said base game.

36. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 32 wherein said accumulated feature qualifying attributes are removed in the event of said base game being played a
25 predetermined number of times.

37. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 36 wherein the characteristics of said feature game is dependent on the accumulation of predetermined feature qualifying attributes.

38. A method according to claim 37 wherein said feature game includes free games.
39. A method according to claim 37 or claim 38 wherein said feature game includes win multipliers.
40. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 39 wherein said feature game
5 includes substitute symbols.
41. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 40 wherein said feature game includes bonus prizes.
42. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 41 wherein said feature game includes held reels.
- 10 43. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 42 wherein said feature game includes bonus reels.
44. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 43 wherein said feature game includes bonus scatter symbols.
45. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 44 wherein said feature game
15 includes bonus substitute symbols.
46. A method according to any one of claims 37 to 45 wherein said feature game includes bonus trigger combinations which award further feature qualifying attributes.
47. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 46 wherein varying levels of said window of opportunity are provided such that higher levels are perceived by a player
20 as returning increased winnings.
48. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 47 wherein said feature qualifying attributes are in the form of jackpot qualifying attributes.
49. A method according to claim 48 wherein said machine is configured to provide a jackpot feature game which can be triggered by a player upon the accumulation of
25 one or more predetermined jackpot qualifying attributes.
-

50. A method according to claim 49 wherein player interaction is required to determine if a jackpot prize is won during said jackpot feature game.

51. A method according to claim 50 wherein a jackpot screen will appear for facilitating said player interaction when a player triggers a jackpot feature game.

5 52. A method according to claim 50 or claim 51 wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a stand-alone machine.

53. A method according to claim 50 or claim 51 wherein said jackpot prize is contributed from a number of machines networked together.

54. A method according to any one of claims 28 to 53 wherein said base game is a
10 spinning reel type using a simulation of five adjacent wheels to present an array of randomly selected symbols in five columns and three rows.